

GOOD NEWS LUTHERAN BRETHREN CHURCH
CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this congregation is Good News Lutheran Brethren Church, Inc. of McAlisterville, Pennsylvania 17049.

ARTICLE II

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. The Bible, including both Old and New Testaments as originally given, is the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God and is free from error in the whole and in the part, and is therefore the final authoritative guide for faith and conduct.
2. There is one God eternally existent in three distinct persons in one divine essence, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. God the Father has revealed Himself as the Creator and preserver of the universe, to Whom the entire creation and all creatures are subject.
4. God created Adam and Eve in His image to live in fellowship with Him. They fell into sin through the temptation of Satan and thereby lost fellowship with God. Through their disobedience the entire human race became totally depraved, that is, self-centered sinners who oppose God, and who by nature are unable to trust, fear or love Him. They are subject to the devil, and are condemned to death under the eternal wrath of God.
5. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son, is the image of the invisible God. To accomplish our redemption, He became fully human, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man, by His perfect obedience and substitutionary death on the cross, has purchased our redemption. He arose from the dead for our justification in the body in which He was crucified. He ascended into heaven, where He is now seated at the right hand of God, the Father, as our interceding High Priest. He will come a second time personally, bodily, and visibly to gather the believers unto Himself. He will judge the living and the dead and make an eternal separation between believers and unbelievers. His kingdom shall have no end.
6. The Holy Spirit is a divine person eternally one with the Father and with the Son. Through the Word of God He convicts people of sin, persuades them to confess their sinfulness to God and calls them to faith through the Gospel. He regenerates, sanctifies, and preserves believers in the one true faith. He comforts, guides, equips, directs, and empowers the church to fulfill the great commission.
7. The knowledge and benefit of Christ's redemption from sin is brought to the human race through the means of grace, namely the Word and the sacraments.
 - a. Through the Word of the Law God brings sinners to know their lost condition and to repent. Through the Word of the Gospel He brings sinners to believe in Jesus Christ, to be justified, to enter the process of sanctification, and to have eternal life. This occurs as the Holy Spirit awakens them to see their sin, convicts them of their guilt of sin, and calls them to repent and believe, inviting and enabling them to accept God's grace in Christ. Each one who thus believes is instantly forgiven and credited with Christ's righteousness. The Word then teaches and guides the believer to lead a godly life.

- b. In the Sacrament of Baptism, God offers the benefits of Christ's redemption to all people and graciously bestows the washing of regeneration and newness of life to all who believe. God calls the baptized person to live in daily repentance, that is, in sorrow for sin, in turning from sin, and in personal faith in the forgiveness of sin obtained by Christ. By grace we are daily given the power to overcome sinful desires and live a new life in Christ. Those who do not continue to live in God's grace need to be brought again to repentance and faith through the Law and Gospel.

Because the sinfulness of human nature passes on from generation to generation and the promise of God's grace includes little children, we baptize infants, who become members of Christ's believing church through baptism. These children need to come to know that they are sinners with a sinful nature that opposes God. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, they need to confess their sinfulness and yield to God; and possess for themselves forgiveness of their sin through Jesus Christ, as they are led from the faith received in infant baptism into a clear conscious personal faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior and being assured of salvation, rely solely on the finished work of Christ, and the power of the Gospel to live as children of God.

- c. In the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Christ gives to the communicants His body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. He declares the forgiveness of sin to all believers, and strengthens their faith.
8. Eternal salvation is available to every living human being on earth by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This salvation consists of an instantaneous aspect and an ongoing, continual aspect.
- a. Justification is God's gracious act by which He, for Christ's sake, instantaneously acquits repentant and believing sinners and credits them with Christ's righteousness. At that moment, God gives each one who believes a new and godly nature and the Holy Spirit begins the process of sanctification. There is no place for human effort in justification.
 - b. Sanctification is God's gracious, continual work of spiritual renewal and growth in the life of every justified person. Through the means of grace, the Holy Spirit works to reproduce the character of Christ within the lives of all believers, instructing and urging them to live out their new nature. The Holy Spirit enables believers more and more to resist the devil, to overcome the world, and to count themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit in and bestows spiritual gifts upon all believers. He calls, empowers and equips them to serve God in the home, in the community, and as part of the Church Universal. The process of sanctification will be complete only when the believer reaches glory.
9. The Church Universal consists of all those who truly believe on Jesus Christ as Savior. The local congregation is an assembly of believers in a certain locality among whom the Gospel is purely taught and the sacraments are rightly administered. The confessing membership of the local congregation shall include only those who have been baptized into "the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," confess personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, maintain a good reputation in the community and accept the constitution of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. It cannot, however, be avoided that hypocrites might be mixed in the congregation; that is, those whose unbelief is not evident to the congregation.
10. The Church of the Lutheran Brethren practices the congregational form of church government and the autonomy of the local congregations. The office of pastor and elder is to be filled by men only. The synodical administration has an advisory function as it relates to the congregation, and an administrative function as it relates to the cooperative efforts of the congregations.

11. The Lutheran confessions are a summary of Bible doctrines. We adhere to the following confessional writings: The Apostles' Creed, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, unaltered Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Small Catechism.

ARTICLE III SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation is a member of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren and operates in harmony with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

Relationship of the Local Congregation to the Synod:

In our relationship to the synod, we practice the congregational form of church government with individual congregations agreeing, partnering, and being responsible together for its doctrine, finances, and mission. The synod is an extension of this partnership and called to direct and manage the cooperative efforts of the congregations of the synod (such as North America Mission, International Mission, Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Communications, etc.). In the case of discipline problems within the local congregation, the Council of Directors has whatever authority is delegated to it by the local congregation. In this way, the synod has an advisory function rather than a ruling function. It may, upon recommendation from the region in which the congregation is located, expel a local congregation from membership in the synod if the congregation no longer reflects the position of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. It may also revoke the ordination of a pastor for doctrinal, moral, or other sufficient reasons.

ARTICLE IV MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Good News LBC is to rightly teach the Gospel and rightly administer the Sacraments through which the Holy Spirit is given and faith is worked in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. (Augsburg Confession Articles V and VII.)

ARTICLE V CHURCH MANAGEMENT

1. Christ is the Head of the Church

Christ is the Head of the Church. Through His Spirit He guides the Church by His Word. According to His Word, He bestows upon the Church gifts of grace necessary for the effectual performance of its various ministrations. Among these ministrations we especially emphasize the office of the pastor, and teaching and governing elders. (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5; Acts 6:2-6; Philippians 1:1)

2. Membership

The voting membership is made up of confessing members who are eighteen years of age or older.

Business decisions take place at the congregational annual meeting and other duly called meetings of the congregation.

3. Elder Board

At the congregational level, we follow the New Testament model of choosing elders in organizing the leadership team. The pastor/s and elders constitute the Elder Board, and to this body the congregation as a whole commits its direction.

The Elder Board acts for the church in all matters pertaining to the spiritual and temporal affairs of the congregation. It may delegate, as appropriate, business or ministry functions to the Finance and Property Committee (Trustees) and other ministry committees established by the congregation. Members of the Elder Board are ex-officio members of all ministry committees. No organization under the jurisdiction of the congregation shall organize or disband without the approval of the Elder Board.

Elections and other matters of primary importance shall be considered by the Elder Board before being brought to the business meeting of the congregation for discussion and final decision.

a. Pastor/s

For the office of pastor, the congregation shall call a man who is a true Christian, who accepts the Constitution of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, who otherwise has the necessary qualifications and is listed on the Church of the Lutheran Brethren Ministers of the Gospel Clergy roster or has been approved by the Council of Directors, pending formal listing on the Clergy roster.

The pastor's primary calling, according to Ephesians 4:12-13, is "to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." He is to give particular attention to the proclamation of the Word and administration of the Sacraments.

The pastor/s of the congregation shall be approved for call by the process described in the by-laws.

b. Elders

The office of elder shall be filled by men who have the spiritual qualifications and abilities as designated in the Scriptures (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-3) and are confessing members of the congregation, recognized as men of faith, integrity and maturity.

Elders are called by the Elder Board and affirmed by the congregation at its annual meeting for three-year terms. An elder shall serve for a minimum of three years prior to being ordained at the recommendation of the Elder Board and with the congregation's approval.

4. Officers

a. Chairman

The chairman of the congregation leads the business meetings of the congregation and chairs the Elder Board. He shall, in consultation with the Elder Board, set the agendas for the meetings. Candidates for the position shall be members of the Elder Board. The congregation at its annual meeting elects the chairman for a one-year term.

b. Vice-Chairman

The vice-chairman, in the absence of the chairman, leads the business meetings of the congregation and chairs the Elder Board. Candidates for the position shall be members of the Elder Board. The congregation at its annual meeting elects the vice-chairman for a one-year term. In the event that neither the Chairman nor the Vice-Chairman is available to lead a business meeting, it will be led by a Pastor or other member of the Elder Board.

c. Secretary

The secretary records and maintains the minutes and correspondence of the congregational business meetings. The secretary shall be a confessing member of the congregation. The congregation at its annual meeting elects the secretary for a one-year term.

d. Treasurer

The treasurer maintains the financial records of the congregation. He/she deposits funds, pays all authorized expenses, issues receipts to donors and provides monthly financial reports to the Elder Board and to the congregational business meetings. The treasurer shall be a confessing member of the congregation and a member of the Finance and Property Committee (Trustees). The congregation at its annual meeting elects the treasurer for a one-year term.

**ARTICLE VI
PROPERTY**

All real property of the congregation shall be deeded to the congregation itself and held in its corporate name. No real property of the congregation shall be sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise disposed of without the same having first been approved by a 2/3 vote of the membership in attendance at a business meeting duly called for the specific consideration of the proposal. The secretary of the congregation and the chairman of the congregation shall certify in such conveyance, lease, or mortgage, that the same has been duly authorized and approved by the congregation.

This congregation shall not allow or sanction any service, function, celebration or other activity to take place on the property owned or under control of the congregation which conflicts with or is expressly contrary to the CLBA Statement of Faith, position papers, Ministerial Acts, or the CLB view of and exegesis of Scripture, which in the view of the congregation would bring disrepute to the name of Christ.

**ARTICLE VII
DISSOLUTION**

Upon dissolution of the congregational corporation or the winding down of its affairs, the assets of the corporation shall be distributed exclusively to an organization(s) which qualifies under the provisions of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code and its regulations as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended, and in accordance with the following provision: if a division should ever occur in this congregation, which God forbid, its properties and assets shall belong to that part of the congregation which abides by this constitution and remains faithful to the Statement of Faith as expressed in Article II – CONFESSIO OF FAITH, whether that part be in the majority or minority. In the event that this congregation is dissolved, the property shall be deeded over to the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America. This paragraph is unalterable.

**ARTICLE VIII
AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended only at the congregational annual meeting. Such amendments must be read at a previous congregational annual meeting, having been submitted by the Elder Board or by the petition of no less than ten confessing members at the previous congregational annual meeting. Adoption of amendments to the constitution requires a minimum two-thirds approval by the voting membership present at the congregational

annual meeting. Amendments to the Constitution shall not conflict with ARTICLE II - CONFESSION OF FAITH, ARTICLE IV - MISSION STATEMENT OR ARTICLE VII- DISSOLUTION.

BYLAWS TO THE CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I CHURCH MANAGEMENT

1. Members and Parishioners

a. Members of the congregation shall be classified as follows:

- 1) Confessing members
- 2) Baptized children of the congregation

Confessing members. Confessing members shall have been baptized into “the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,” confess personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, maintain a good reputation in the community and accept this constitution.

All requests for confessing membership are made to the Elder Board which recommends candidates to the congregation.

Baptized children of the congregation may request confessing membership when they reach confirmation age. Only *confessing members* of the congregation who have reached the age of eighteen may vote at congregational business meetings. They shall not have membership in any secret society or other organization that, in its official statements or rites, asserts that individuals are reconciled to God outside of Jesus Christ and His atonement.

A member who does not attend worship regularly and/or fails to “steadfastly continue in the teaching...and in the fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers” (Acts 2:42) shall be contacted by the pastor and/or elders and encouraged to actively participate in the life of the congregation. If the member remains inactive, his/her name shall be removed from the active membership roster of the congregation, at the discretion of the Elder Board. His/her name will be retained on an inactive membership roster. Inactive members may not vote in congregational meetings and will not be counted among the number of the meeting quorum. An inactive member could restore membership by 1) reintegrating into the regular worship and fellowship of the congregation 2) making request to restore active status, contingent upon approval by the Elder Board.

Expulsion from the congregation can be brought about only by the action of the congregation itself in a lawfully assembled meeting.

Baptized children of the congregation. Children baptized in the congregation and all baptized children of confessing members shall be designated *baptized children of the congregation*. This status continues until they reach the age of eighteen, or are accepted as confessing members of the congregation, whichever occurs first. Those not requesting adult membership shall become parishioners.

b. Parishioners

Baptized children of the congregation become parishioners if they have not been received as confessing members. In addition, the Elder Board may include as parishioners those who wish to call this their church home. The Elder Board may remove the names of parishioners when they deem it necessary or advisable.

2. Elder Board

- a. The Elder Board shall additionally:
 - 1) Determine dates and times for the business meetings of the congregation.
 - 2) Maintain and annually review the membership roster of the congregation.
 - 3) Handle all cases of church discipline as set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and 1 Timothy 5:19. The Elder Board has the authority on behalf of the congregation to exclude a member from the Lord's Supper. It may recommend to the congregation a member's loss of the privilege to vote in congregational matters. It has the responsibility to recommend a member's excommunication by the congregation, and it also has the responsibility to initiate procedures for reinstatement of those disciplined. Members who are re-instated are welcomed with the following passages of Scripture: 2 Corinthians 2:6-11, James 5:16, Psalm 32:5, John 20:23.
 - 4) Equip Christ's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-13)
 - 5) In cooperation with the Finance & Property Committee (Trustees), develop congregational ministry plans and budget for presentation and approval at the congregational annual business meeting.
- b. Pastor
 - 1) Call Process: The voting membership is responsible for calling the pastor/s of the congregation. A call committee shall be appointed by the Board of Elders. The call committee shall be made up of the Elder Board and other members of the congregation as needed.. The call committee shall interview candidates and prepare a recommendation for the congregation. The call process shall be conducted in harmony with the CLB documents entitled *The Pastoral Calling Process* and the *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook*. The letter of call shall be approved by a minimum of two-thirds of the voting membership at a duly called congregational business meeting.
 - 2) Pastoral Work: The pastor shall conduct himself and his ministry according to the guidelines set forth in the synodical policy statement entitled, *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook*. He shall follow the *Ministerial Acts of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren* in leading the services of the church, and conduct regular membership classes.
 - 3) Dismissal: The dismissal of a pastor shall take upon the recommendation of the Elder Board at a duly called business meeting of the congregation. The dismissal requires approval by a minimum of two-thirds of the voting membership present at the meeting. If dismissed, the pastor shall be provided his current compensation package, prorated for one month per year of former service within the congregation, for a maximum of three months, or until he is placed in another call or other employment, whichever occurs first. If he is living in a parsonage he is entitled to remain in the parsonage for up to three months.
 - 4) Resignation: The resignation of a pastor shall be accepted by a simple majority vote of the members present at a duly called congregational business meeting. The pastor's departure from the congregation shall take place within a negotiated period of one to three months.
- c. Elders
 - 1) The Elder Board shall provide one year of training for prospective elders prior to calling them to the Office of Elder.
 - 2) The pastor/s and elders of the church shall seek to strengthen their skills through regular participation in training events, studies, seminars and classes.

- 3) An elder who violates the responsibilities of his office may be removed from office by applying the following procedures based on Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:19: An elder or other member of the congregation must bring the charge before the Elder Board, which will review its validity. The elder in question shall have the opportunity to answer the charge before the board. If by a majority vote, the board concurs with the charge, the elder shall forfeit his position and duties, or be allowed to resign gracefully. If the elder feels he has been unfairly treated, he may request that the matter be referred to a duly called congregational business meeting for a vote. His removal from office by the congregation requires approval by a minimum of two-thirds of the voting membership present at the meeting.

3. Ministry Committees

a. Deacon and Deaconess Committee

The deacon committee serves under the general supervision of the Elder Board by providing care for the practical needs of members and parishioners in order to support the pastors and elders in their ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2-4).

In addition to the pastors and representatives of the Elder Board appointed by the same, the deacon committee shall be composed of a minimum of three members. The members of the committee shall be confessing members of the congregation. They are elected by the congregation at its annual meeting for three-year terms.

b. Finance and Property Committee (Trustees)

The finance and property committee serves under the general supervision of the Elder Board with the responsibility of overseeing the finances and assets of the congregation.

In addition to the treasurer, the pastors and representatives of the Elder Board appointed by the same, the finance and property committee shall be composed of a minimum of three members. The members of the committee shall be confessing members of the congregation. They are elected by the congregation at its annual meeting for three-year terms.

c. Nominating Committee

The nominating committee presents a slate of candidates for each elected office at the congregation's annual meeting. The nominating committee shall be composed of one elder selected by the Elder Board and two confessing members elected by the congregation at its annual meeting for a one-year term.

d. Auditing Committee

The auditing committee verifies and reports on the accuracy of the congregation's financial records to the congregational annual meeting. The committee shall be composed of two confessing members, elected by the congregation at its annual business meeting for a one-year term.

e. Other Committees

The congregation shall establish additional ministry committees as needed to carry out the mission of the congregation. These committees shall operate under the general supervision of the Elder Board. They will submit annual plans, budget proposals and reports to the Elder Board.

4. Finance and Property Committee (Trustees)

This committee shall:

- a. Manage the financial affairs of the congregation and the day-to-day business of all real and personal properties belonging to the congregation on behalf of the Elder Board, and submit financial reports, minutes from its business meetings and proposals to the Elder Board.
- b. Transact all other business of the congregation assigned to it by the congregational meeting or by the Elder Board.
- c. Maintain the congregational property and buildings.
- d. Submit to the Elder Board, three weeks prior to the congregational annual meeting, annual plan and budget.

5. Deacon and Deaconess Committee

This committee shall:

- a. Be composed of as many husband and wife teams and single adults as the Elder Board deems necessary. Candidates for this committee shall be selected on the basis of the Biblical qualifications included in 1 Timothy 3:8-16 and Acts 6:3-8.
- b. Give particular attention to the care of the sick, aged, grieving, and needy members and parishioners of this congregation. It shall keep the congregation informed concerning these needs and help to channel assistance to those in need.

ARTICLE II MEETINGS

1. Worship Services are held on a weekly basis.

2. Annual Congregational Meeting

- a. The congregation's fiscal year extends from January 1 through December 31.
- b. An annual business meeting of the congregation shall be regularly scheduled for the first Sunday in February. In the event of a postponement, the meeting will be held on the second Sunday in February. At their discretion, the Elder Board may schedule this meeting for any Sunday in January or February. The annual meeting shall be announced at the worship service on two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting.
- c. The voting membership of the congregation is made up of confessing members who are at least eighteen years of age.
- d. At the annual meeting, reports from the congregational secretary and treasurer, pastor/s, Elder Board, and committees are received; ministry plans and budget are adopted; business is conducted and Elder Board members, officers and committee members are elected.
- e. *Roberts Rules of Order* shall be the basis for parliamentary procedure in all deliberations of the business meetings of the congregation.

3. Other Business Meetings

Business meetings, other than the annual meeting, shall be held as deemed necessary by the Elder Board. Business meetings shall be announced at the worship service one Sunday prior to the meeting.

4. Quorum

To transact legal business at the annual meeting, call or dismiss a pastor, or act on the sale or purchase of property, a quorum of fifty percent of the active, resident members is required. All other business meetings of the church require a quorum of twenty-five percent of the active, resident members to transact legal business.

ARTICLE III
LIMITS TO EXPENDITURES

Non-budgeted expenditures, such as unforeseen repairs or replacements, or special opportunities, shall be approved by the Elder Board. Non-budgeted expenditures exceeding \$5,000 must be approved by the congregation.

ARTICLE IV
AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

The Bylaws of this constitution may be amended at a duly called congregational business meeting. Such amendments must have been read at the previous congregational business meeting, having been submitted by the Elder Board or by the petition of no less than ten confessing members at that previous business meeting. Adoption of amendments to the by-laws requires a minimum two-thirds approval by the voting membership present at the meeting. Amendments to the Bylaws shall not conflict with ARTICLE II - CONFSSION OF FAITH, ARTICLE IV - MISSION STATEMENT or ARTICLE VII- DISSOLUTION.